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july 31, 1990

TRINIDAD AND
TOBAGO:

Hostage Situation Remains Stalemated

The tough bargaining position insisted on by the security forces in Trinidad and Tobago continues to hamstring efforts by the acting government to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the hostage crisis.
(S NF)

Negotiations between government officials and the Abu Bakr-led rebels reportedly broke down again last night. Press reports indicate government leaders had agreed to allow the rebels to return under military escort to their compound in western Port-of-Spain where they would disarm, release the hostages, and be granted amnesty. Earlier in the day, the security forces reportedly fired on armed rebels outside of the radio and television station controlled by Abu Bakr and set the annex on fire. Although security officials believe several rebels may have been killed in the fire, there are no indications that Abu Bakr has been harmed. Rebel forces remain in control of the Parliament building, but as many as eight of the 20 to 30 rebels there reportedly have been wounded or killed. (S NF NC)

Meanwhile, 314 armed forces and police personnel from Jamaica and the seven Eastern Caribbean countries that make up the Regional Security System have assembled in Barbados and are prepared to deploy to Trinidad and Tobago if requested by Trinidadian authorities. Venezuela has offered to provide airlift support and logistic assistance to the regional contingent; it also has stationed two naval frigates off Trinidad in a show of force. (S NF)

Comment: Security officials appear determined to force the rebels to surrender and are calculating this strategy will not provoke Abu Bakr's supporters into killing the hostages. They also may reason that their ability to divide and eventually wear down the rebels is strengthened by the fact that the hostage takers are concentrated in two sites. If the regional military force is sent to Trinidad and Tobago, it will be used in a noncombat support role. (S NF)
-CIA, [REDACTED]

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